

Transylvania County Natural Area Inventory

CATHEYS CREEK WETLAND Significant Natural Heritage Area

Site Significance: County
Quadrangle: Rosman

Size: 14 acres
Ownership: Private

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Catheys Creek Wetland lies in an alluvial forest/wetland complex in the floodplain of Catheys Creek as it flows out of the Pisgah National Forest. Much of the low-lying area is a County-significant example of a Swamp Forest-Bog Complex and disturbed alluvial areas that provide excellent amphibian breeding habitat. The swamp forest supports a population of red turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*), and the creek harbors one of two occurrences of golden saxifrage (*Chrysoplenium americanum*) encountered during the Transylvania County inventory.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: The site is approximately three miles southwest of Brevard in the floodplain of Catheys Creek, upstream of its crossing with US 64. The site buffers Catheys Creek Aquatic Habitat, and represents the last significant forested patch along Catheys Creek between the French Broad River and the Pisgah National Forest. Other wetland areas located along US 64 have mostly been altered due to road construction and past and on-going farming practices. The site is bordered by Catheys Creek to the south and a paved road to the northeast. Disturbed woods and agricultural fields border the rest of the site.

SITE DESCRIPTION: Catheys Creek Wetland site is comprised of a flat alluvial area at the base of the first ridges along the Brevard Fault zone. Catheys Creek and its tributaries may have been historically altered in the vicinity of the site. Extensive borrow pits, ditching, and signs of wetland fill were left by an old mining operation that altered the local topography. The resulting alteration has created a series of borrow pits that act as vernal pools and support large amphibian and aquatic invertebrate populations.

A naturally occurring Swamp Forest-Bog Complex lies in the floodplain mixed with disturbed Montane Alluvial Forest. This swamp forest is dominated by red maple (*Acer rubrum*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), and sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*). Ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*) is a common understory tree. Mountain dog-hobble (*Leucothoe fontanesiana*), tag alder (*Alnus serrulata*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), and silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*) are common shrubs. *Sphagnum* moss beds are mixed with a lush herb layer containing arrow-leaf tearthumb (*Persicaria sagittata*), sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), American pennywort (*Hydrocotyle americana*), groundnut (*Apios americana*), manna-grasses (*Glyceria striata* and *G. melicaria*), bog rough-stem goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* var. *sphagnofila*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*), net-leaf chain fern (*Woodwardia areolata*), cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), bulrush (*Scirpus expansus*), sedges (*Carex atlantica*, *C. folliculata*, and *C. stricta*), and green wood-orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*). A population of red turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*) grows in the swamp forest here.